



**Universal Acceptance Day Uruguay - May 26 , 2025**

**Presentation of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)**

**Rodrigo de la Parra – ICANN**

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### **1. Welcome and context of the event**

Rodrigo de la Parra, ICANN Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean, began by thanking Laura Margolis and the Internet Society Uruguay Chapter for their invitation . He regretted not being able to be physically present, but celebrated the fact that Uruguay was one of the three venues in the region where Universal Acceptance Day 2025 was held, in collaboration with UNESCO. He emphasized that these initiatives reinforce a shared vision of digital inclusion and linguistic diversity.

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### **2. Historical origins of the ICANN–UNESCO collaboration**

De la Parra framed the relationship between ICANN and UNESCO within the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process** , with milestones in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005). In that framework, UNESCO promoted the idea of a "multilingual Internet," which laid the groundwork for the subsequent development of **internationalized domain names ( IDNs )** , which were essential for allowing people from different cultures to have a digital presence using their own alphabets and writing systems.

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### 3. Internationalized Domain Names ( IDNs )

He explained that **IDNs ( Internationalized Domain Names )** are domains that can contain characters outside the Latin alphabet, such as Arabic, Cyrillic, or Chinese letters, or accents. This is essential for the Internet to reflect the world's linguistic diversity. In the case of Spanish, although it is based on the Latin alphabet, it features its own characters (such as the ñ or accented vowels) that were not accepted in early Internet standards.

These advances allowed domain names and email addresses to be adapted to non-Latin alphabets, which is a technical and cultural prerequisite for true **universal acceptance (UA)** .

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### 4. From IDNs to Universal Acceptance (UA)

Rodrigo explained that the UA is the natural evolution of the efforts initiated with IDNs . It refers to the principle that **all domain names and email addresses—regardless of their length, language, alphabet, or script—must be accepted, validated, and correctly processed by all technological systems** : browsers, email, forms, registries, databases, etc.

**memorandum of understanding** with UNESCO , initially focused on IDNs but which has since been expanded to encompass the full spectrum of Universal Acceptance. UA is crucial for closing the technological gaps affecting underrepresented languages and scripts.

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### 5. Changes in web content and linguistic visibility

He mentioned that, in 2005, one of the most serious problems was that **internet content was overwhelmingly in English** . Although that situation has changed slightly, the imbalance persists. The AU seeks to help **more languages have fair representation** not only in content, but also in naming infrastructure, thus enabling truly **global digital inclusion** .

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## 6. Evolution of top-level domains ( TLDs )

He detailed the history of top-level domains:

- **ccTLDs (Country Code Top- Level Domains )**: National two-letter domains (.uy, . br , . mx ), based on the ISO 3166 standard.
- **gTLDs ( Generic Top- Level) Domains )**: Traditionally, there were just a few such as . com , . net, . org . But, since 2004, ICANN has launched new rounds that have allowed hundreds of additional gTLDs to be registered (. info , . online, . shop, . cafe , . london , . google , etc.).

Today, there are **more than 1,200 active gTLDs** , many with long names in different scripts, representing brands, cities, communities, and concepts. This growth has created new demands on systems that manage names, email addresses, and registrations.

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## 7. Current challenges in the implementation of the AU

De la Parra noted that **many digital platforms, web applications, and software still do not correctly recognize** new gTLDs or special characters. This causes errors or rejections in forms, emails, or user validation, preventing the full use of valid but non-traditional domains.

The incompatibility is due to outdated systems that validate names based on old lists or outdated rules. This directly affects users, especially those seeking to make their linguistic or cultural identity visible online.

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## 8. ICANN Approach to Promoting UA

ICANN has structured its strategy on **three fundamental pillars** :

1. **General awareness:** Promote understanding of the problem among policymakers, businesses, academic institutions, and civil society.
  2. **Specialized technical training:** Training developers and system administrators on how to adapt their tools to support IDNs and gTLDs, through practical guides and technical documentation.
  3. **Incorporation into academic programs:** Integrate the UA into the curricula of technology and computer science programs, so that future professionals are prepared to work with inclusive standards from the start.
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## **9. Participation of experts and closing**

Rodrigo announced that his colleague **Nicolás Antonielo** would participate later in the event to present a more technical and detailed overview of ICANN's work around the AU. He concluded by reiterating his gratitude to the Internet Society of Uruguay, Laura Margolis , and UNESCO for sponsoring the event, and wished all participants success.

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